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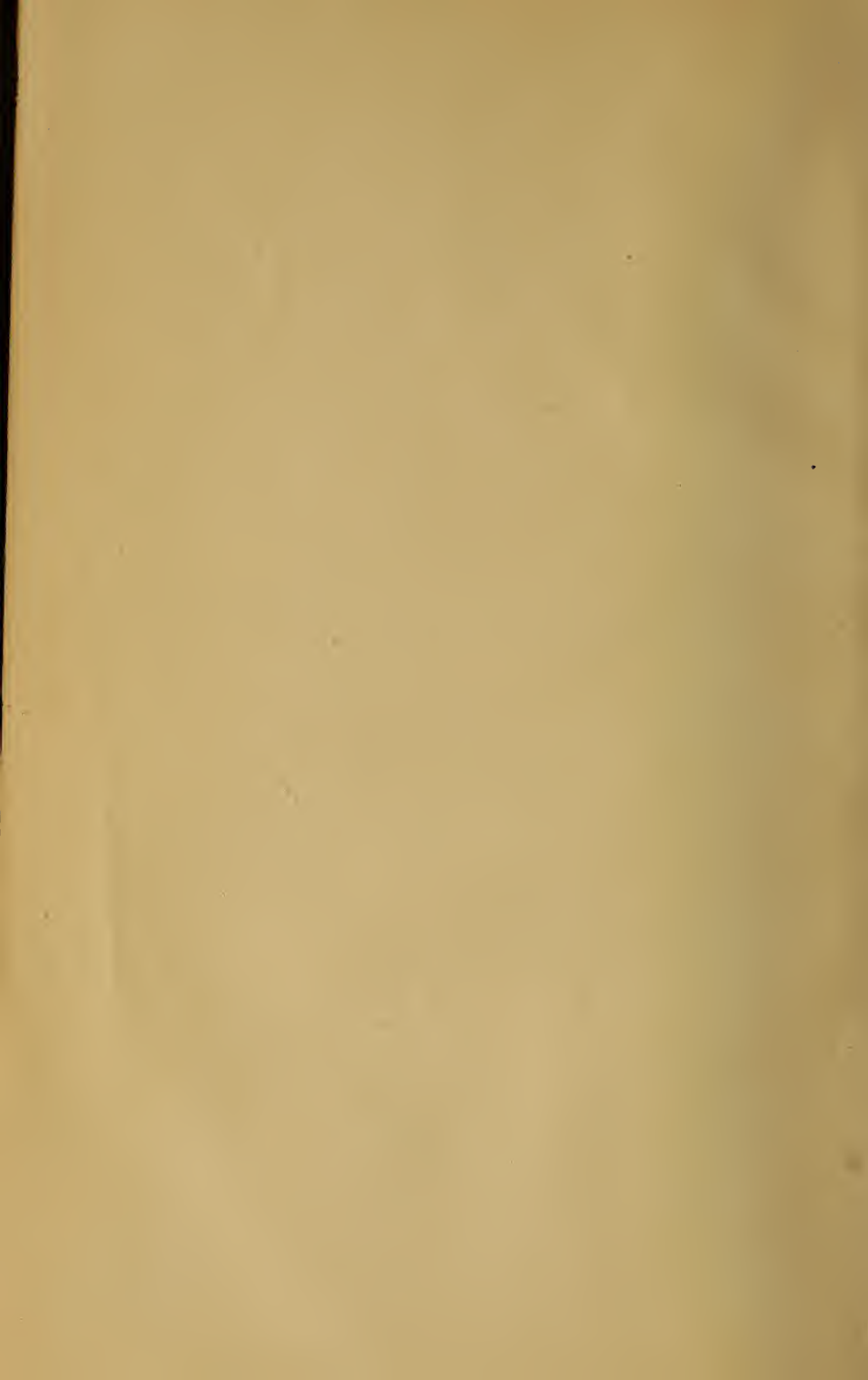
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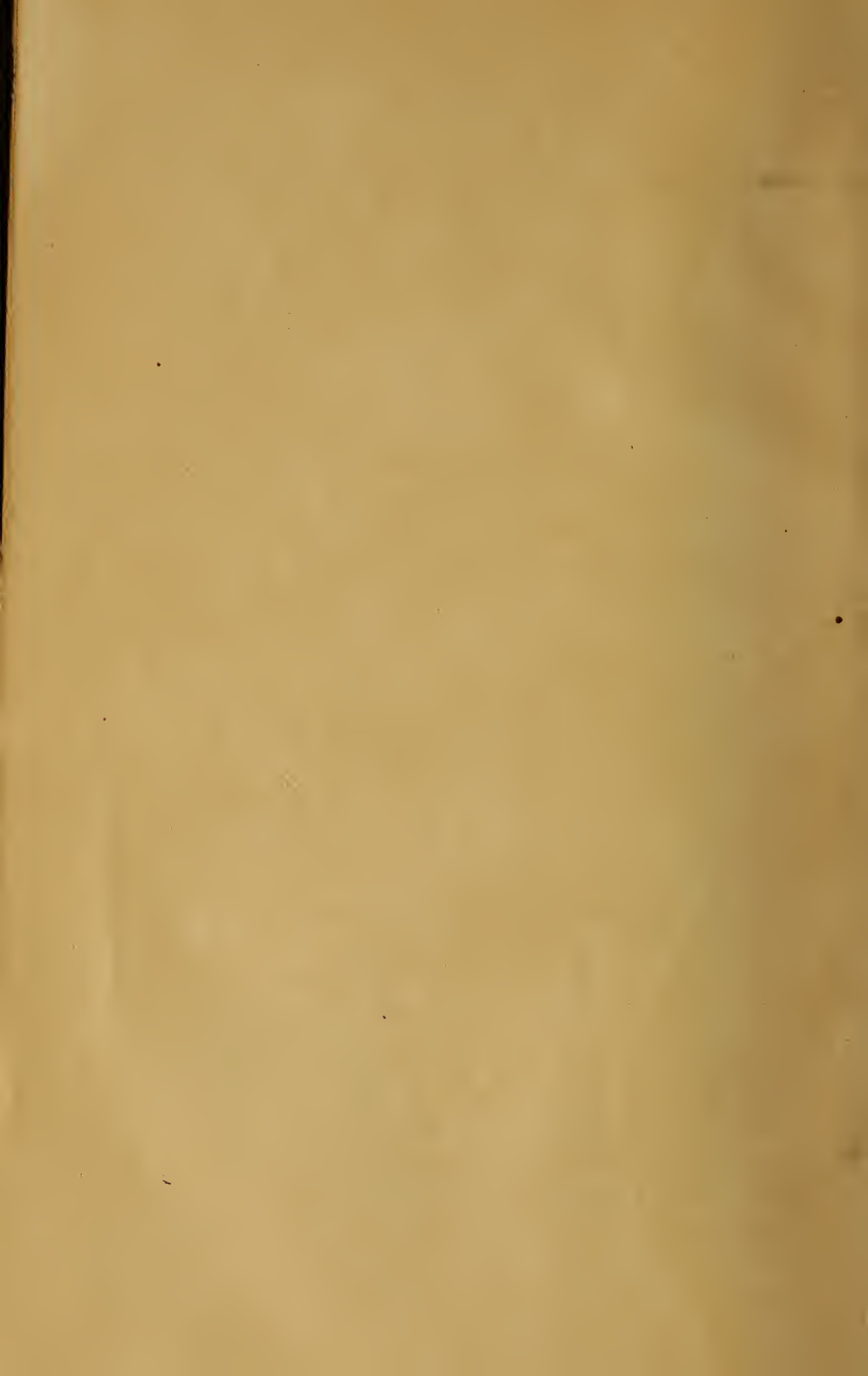
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UNITED STATES OF AMERICA.









AN

ORATION

PRONOUNCED BEFORE THE

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OF

AMHERST COLLEGE,

August 23, 1836.

BY CALEB CUSHING.

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## ORATION.

*Εἰς Ἀθῆνας*, was the choral strain of the maidens of Thrace. Is there a heart, once imbued with classic lore, which thrills not responsive to the call? Wander through the world as he may, it is the *ranz des vaches* of the scholar's affection. In that fairest of the seasons of life, its genial and buoyant spring-time just ripening into summer, when the hopes and the aspirations of manhood, not yet accompanied with its cares or its toils, kindle within us, we bid farewell to the scenes and the studies of our youth. We feel the hour of action come. Knowledge is to us its own sufficient recompense no longer. We plunge into the tide of affairs; perchance to see its troubled waves roll over us, leaving only the boiling eddy to mark for a brief space the spot where we sink; or, it may be, with better skill, or happier fortune, to bear us onward the voyage of time auspiciously to its appointed end. We seek to be useful and happy in our chosen walk of life; we enjoy and we suffer; we pursue riches, power, fame; we discharge the offices of duty, of religion, of love to our neighbor and our God. In short, we fulfil our destiny on earth. It is right we should. For what avails a mere cloistered virtue, which

wilts away if the noon-tide sun do but shine upon it, which never met and never withstood an adversary temptation, and which, it has been well said, “shrinks out of the race, where the immortal garland is to be run for, not without dust and heat?”—Yet, in after days, amid all the crowding thoughts of the present and the mottled recollections of the past, there is a cherished reminiscence at our hearts consecrated to the scholastic shades of our Alma Mater. It is the Diamond of the Desert, a bright oasis in the waste of memory. It invokes us, by the reverence we owe to good letters, by the love of knowledge animating us, that we also go up to Athens; that we re-tread with pride and pleasure the walks of the Lyceum, and hold sweet counsel together once again in the groves of Academus.

True it is, that, in many of the scenes of active life, it is no honor to retain the taste of literary cultivation; nay, in some, it is an object of obloquy and reproach. If, indeed, letters be cultivated to the abandonment or neglect of the higher duties of society, if without fruit or advantage to the world, let condemnation fall where it belongs. I cannot acknowledge, however, that time is unworthily bestowed upon studies, which are alike the embellishment of prosperity and the solace of adversity,—*secundas res ornant, adversis perfugium ac solatium præbent*,—which feed the mind with its purest nourishment, and place before us the noblest models of imitation. And for myself I do confess, that I never cease to recur with fond emotion to the classic hours of academic life. Its memory seems linked with associations of the grandeur of antiquity; sublimated above the homely tenor of our daily existence; full of thoughts hallowed and

softened by distance into the twilight tints of loveliness and grace; pouring in upon the soul examples of patriotism and wisdom hallowed by the admiration of successive centuries; speaking to the mind's ear, like an echo of the glorious accents of that old eloquence, which sounded over the earth; summoning before the mind's eye the long procession of the great and good of other ages, who, though dead, yet live in their works and in their deathless immortality of fame. Its feelings, its ideas, its tastes, cling to me, as if incorporated with the physical essence of being.

Cherishing such emotions, I come hither to this honored seat of learning, escaped for a day from the exacting occupations and the passionate contentions of active life, with the gladiator's tunic and the sand of the arena, as it were, still upon me, to address on this occasion the young, the educated young, to whom the world is yet untried and comparatively unknown, except as the experience of others may render it to their understanding. You are dedicated to intellectual pursuits. You do not go forth to the world when your academic years have past, to fall into the rank and file of ordinary life, but to become conspicuous members of society, its teachers, its guides, its lights. You inhabit a country, which is pressing forward in the career of prosperity and power with the strides of a giant, and which, replete as it is with the sharpest incentives to exertion, holds up the great prizes of life with impartial hand to the grasp of courage and of merit. Aiming to afford you practical instruction, suited to the relations of speaker and hearer, I propose to offer some illustrations of the uses of popular eloquence, adapted to the condition of society and the

times in which you are destined to move; the dignity, the importance, the application of this, among the most potent of the modes in which mind acts upon mind.

If we proceed to analyze these various modes, we perceive that, independently of the indirect influence of example, association, the institutions, monuments and fashions of society, mind acts upon mind, in the first place, by the direct control of conduct, as in government, legislation, war, and the like means of applying the will of an individual, through the exercise of national force, to mould the manners and modify the social condition of mankind. Instances of this occur in great lawgivers, like Solon, Lycurgus, Numa; in the founders of states and empires, like Romulus or Cæsar; in the introduction of a new religion, as by Constantine or Clovis, or the modification of an old one, as by Henry VIII; in fundamental social changes operated by public authority, as in the example of the cultivation of Russia by Peter, and the American and French revolutions; or in the subjugation of a state and the forcible change of its government, religion or laws, as in the case of the Roman and Saracen conquests in Europe, and the Spanish in America.

Secondly, it is by the direct intercommunication of ideas through the medium of sensible signs of thought, especially in speech or in writing. Frequently this is accompanied with more or less of authoritativeness, as in the instruction imparted by a parent to his children, or of a master to his pupil; in the religious doctrines inculcated from the desk or through the press by men invested with sacred functions; in the compositions of popular and esteemed authors; in the newspaper press, that great engine of popular impression and every day knowledge;

in the speeches of public men, whose respectability, station or talents may give reflected authority even to opinions not possessed of legal force.

In each of these modes of action, it is individual mind, which impels other minds. Occasionally, there enters upon the scene of life a man of transcendent intellect, who, lighting upon a happy combination of circumstances, or rather placed in it by an all-seeing and all-disposing power, changes the whole face of things by the supreme force of one mind. Some Bacon, who creates the science of nature anew; some Newton or Fulton, who, as with a touch of the enchanter's wand of genius, gives being or impulse to a great department of knowledge or art; some Gregory or Luther, who, in the seclusion of his cabinet or cell, plans and accomplishes the reform of whole nations; some Charlemagne or Napoleon, who revolutionizes the world.

But all these are great exceptions to the course of things, not the ordinary cases of human efficiency. In the bounded circle wherein most men are destined to move, the capacity for acting upon society is more widely diffused just in proportion as it is less potent in the individual case. And as distinctive, especially, though not exclusively, of the institutions of our times, and of our own country, the influence of spoken opinions, addressed to great assemblies, religious, literary and political, and aside from the common forms of scholastic tuition, is one of the most marked characteristics of the age.

When Alexander of Macedon had subdued the great Persian and Median empire, and borne his victorious arms to the uttermost shores of Asia,—when, lamenting that no second world remained for him to conquer, he

returned to Babylon, drunk with pride and power, and master of all the riches of the East,—the wildest projects of insane adulation were continually poured into his ears. None was more stupendous than that of the architect Stasicrates. There stretches out into the Ægæan Sea the vast promontory of Mount Athos, which beetles over the mariner as he sails past, and at sun-down projects its huge shadow leagues off upon the hills of Lemnos, darkening over land and sea like a planetary eclipse. Stasicrates proposed to carve Mount Athos into a colossal statue of Alexander, that should hold a city of ten thousand inhabitants in its left hand, and in its right a horn of plenty sending forth a deep river into the Ægæan Sea.

What the bold Greek conceived,—a project apparently beyond the reach of human agency, extravagant, gigantic, Titanian,—even this much, in its effects upon the physical exterior and the moral constitution of the world, has been accomplished by the intellect of *Man*. Out of the very face of the primeval wilderness, he has raised up a form, lofty and majestic in its proportions; cultured fields, populous towns, imperial states, are in the palm of its hand; it pours out a perennial stream of prosperity and abundance, to fertilize and enrich the earth; it is the sublime personification of that moral and social order, that organization of physical strength, animated by a great moral and intellectual purpose, which constitutes the civilization of Christendom.

We see it manifest, that, setting aside the great ruling power which governs him and the universe alike, man is lord of the whole earth. Look at him individually, and in his solitary unaided strength, ere the faculties of his soul have developed their amazing might, and he

seems weak, insignificant, when compared with other objects on the globe he inhabits. Imagine you could comprehend the whole earth, as it revolves, in a single inspection, with as it were an all-seeing eye placed in some supernal point, overlooking the very frame of creation. As the sight extended over the diversified surface of the earth, and observed the long chains of lofty mountains spread out upon it from pole to pole, river after river rolling its waters to the distant sea, and the ocean itself, that world of waves, with its surges lashed into fury by the storm,—and then paused for a moment, to regard man himself in his apparent littleness contrasted with all around,—should we deem that he exercised authority and control over the material universe? That when the winds rushed forth in hurricane, he could bear up against the extremity of their wrath? That he might dig himself a path into the bowels of the mountain, in search of objects for the gratification of his taste? That he should convert the terrible element of fire into the very slave of his wants? And that it belonged to him to march in confidence and safety over the bosom of the fathomless deep? Yet, extraordinary, grand, as it is to conceive, it is man's prerogative, the privilege which intellect imparts to him alone of the inhabitants of the globe, to have dominion over the elements of earth and sea, of air and fire, so that he may convert them into the instruments of his pleasure and the servants of his will. For, though in physical properties inferior to so many of his fellow inhabitants of the earth, though endowed neither with the speed of the dromedary nor the strength of the elephant, though unable of himself alone to soar in mid air like the eagle, or chase the leviathan of the deep in

his native element, yet over all these, as over the inanimate objects of creation, has God crowned him with the empire of Mind.

Let us pause to contemplate the operations of that marvellous power, before whose invisible presence all things on earth bend the knee in obedient homage. Take an example in the physical sciences, so as to appreciate the force of intellect, which scans and measures the movements of the celestial bodies. For how sublime, when we consider it in due deliberation, is the image of the "famous Galileo, grown old, a prisoner to the Inquisition, for thinking in astronomy otherwise than the Franciscan and Dominican licences thought," braving temporal power in the confidence of right, yielding up his body to the doom of the church, yet, with soul fetterless and free as ever, still affirming the grand truth of the revolutions of the earth. *Eppure si muove!* Or of Herschell in his nightly solitude of Slough, sending out his observation millions of miles into the illimitable regions of space, studying the aspects of those remote orbs, which, to the common sight but dim sparkling dots on the concave of the blue sky, are in the eye of science other suns, the centres of other systems, dispensing light and life to unimaginable worlds. Or of Newton weighing the universe as it were in a balance, and unveiling to us the mighty agent, appointed to suspend the innumerable suns and stars in the liquid ether, and hold them wheeling on forever in the spheres prescribed to them by the ordination of the Omnipotent and the Eternal.

Striking as are these exhibitions of the force and capacity of mind, it is not, I think, in the abstract or the natural sciences, that its uses are chiefly important or



admirable. Concede whatever of greatness and genius you will to the eminent professors of physical or metaphysical learning, is theirs the only, the true, the highest philosophy? Oh no.—Ideology, mathematics, astronomy, the science of analyzing, combining, comparing, ideas or objects, to weigh or decompose the air, to dissect a ray of light, to work out problems of algebra, to measure the attraction of atoms, to speculate on the origin of ideas, to discuss whether matter is mind or mind matter, or neither of them either mind or matter,—in short, the knowledge of the closet, is the means, not the end or essence, of philosophy. For suppose the natural or abstract sciences never to be taught:—might not men still study to be wise, and virtuous, and happy? Yes, indeed.

Virtue could see to do what virtue would,  
By her own radiant light, though sun and moon  
Were in the flat sea sunk.

Knowledge in action, wisdom, that wisdom which consists in the regulation of life to the ends of virtue and happiness, *φιλοσοφία βίου κυβερνητικῆς*, here is the philosophy, which Plato and Zeno taught, and of which they rightly regarded the physical sciences, and the theory of the mind's operations, not as the chief substance, but only as the secondary parts, the aids, and the ministering handmaidens. This, and this only is that divine philosophy, which, according to Tully's bold metaphor, Socrates drew down from heaven to enlighten the heathen world; and which, after being so long overlaid or pressed aside by the crowd of other matters, now, in our own immediate age, called up again by the general shock of social

interests and opinions, is resuming its proper station as the prime study of christian Europe and America.

We live and labor to be wiser, better, happier ; happier in the possession and enjoyment of wisdom and goodness, in the communication of happiness to others, in the pursuit and acquisition of social advantages which are the stimulus and the reward of well-doing, in the consciousness of right, in the enlightened desire that our memory may survive us in the approbation of our times and the esteem of posterity, happiest in the tranquil anticipation of that which is to be in the never ending hereafter of another life. To these objects, all the science of the schools, all philosophy, all teaching, all that wisdom can plan or eloquence utter, do perpetually point. There is nothing appropriate to this life, there can be nothing, higher or worthier, than the well-ordering of society, the regulation of men's conduct, and the bettering of their condition. It challenges the especial devotedness of those, who, as educated men, blessed with natural or acquired endowments superior to what their fellows possess, stand prominent for good or for evil example in the eye of the world.

Providence has filled the world with inequalities of character and condition :—physical differences, moral, intellectual, social differences. One man is an amphibious savage upon the deluged plains of the Orinoco, living in huts or upon trees in half naked brutality, and gorging himself with clay to still the cravings of hunger ; while another is clad in purple, pillowed upon silk and down, revelling amid the halls of palaces, a Sybarite pained by the rumpling of a rose-leaf. Some are the lights of their age and the pride of our race—brave, wise, learned, eloquent, virtuous, high-minded—men, who in their path of

life illumine and quicken the world, like the bright sun in heaven irradiating the globe. Others seem dedicated to violence and crime, as if, like pestilence or hurricane, they were sent only to be the ministers of the vengeance of Destiny. To study these differences, to discover their source and their remedy, to purify the bad and elevate the low, to direct the energies of society to the improvement of itself,—what a field is here for the loftiest efforts of intellect and of eloquence!

Society no longer consists of numerous independent cities, occupied by freemen devoted to arts and arms, with household slaves and predial helots for the chief instruments of productive industry, as in the days of the Greeks and the Romans. It no longer consists of great barons, with their lawless feudal, following to domineer over the timid husbandman or peaceful burgher, as in the early times of modern Europe. The social elements are now in a state of general fusion and recomposition, by reason of the development of the true republican principle, of the political equality of men under and through established law, to the end of the greater good of the greater number.

It needs but a glance at the history of the last five hundred years, to discern the fact and to understand how it came to pass. You see the art of printing diffuse knowledge, extend education, generalize intellectuality, and thus augment a thousand fold the moral force of the mass of mankind. You see the invention of gunpowder change the nature of war, converting it into a game of skill and of combination, that is, of intellect, in lieu of the mere brute force of prowess in arms. You see the discovery of America imparting boundless scope to the love

of adventure and of wealth. You witness the effect of these things in the general progress of LIBERTY, as it is called; that is, the moral and intellectual, as well as the political, independence of the individual man:—developed, first in the Protestant Reformation, which emancipated the mind from the bondage of the Roman Church; secondly, in the English Revolution, which applied the principle to the introduction of radical domestic changes; thirdly, in the American Revolution, adapting itself to personal liberty and national independence combined; and finally, in the French Revolution, which rendered the principle European, or co-extensive in its influence with the limits of Christendom.

At the present hour, all the causes indicated are in full activity, and acquiring more and more velocity of movement every minute, like a falling body in space; in addition to which, that progress of social improvement, which the press, gunpowder and the mariners' compass originally impelled, has gained new intensity from the steam-engine, which, in the approximation of distances, and in its application to the arts of peace and of war, is effecting changes in society only less remarkable than those accomplished by the press itself.

Power, strength, vigor, knowledge, the physical energy to do and the indomitable will to dare, have become the common property of the universal mass. Our own particular institutions are but the practical exemplification of the principle, which nature has infused into the hearts, and stamped upon the brow of man,—that power shall follow upon the capacity to exercise it, and that all may seek by worthy means the happiness which all are equally entitled to enjoy. It is the charter of human freedom,

written by no human hands, granted by no human authority, but communicated by the great God himself, in the spark of his own ethereal essence, the emanation of his own divinity, the immortal soul which animates our perishable frames.

And why seek to disguise that which it is impossible to deny? Popular supremacy was to be, and it is. It is a happened fact, which cannot be recalled, and which, if it were desirable, it is too late to prevent. Why then, I repeat, seek to disguise it? Rather brace we ourselves, to that existing event, which is the inevitable and irreversible order of the time. You cannot arrest the movement of society. You may place yourself in its pathway, but only to be crushed into powder under the footsteps of its advancing legions. It is a mountain torrent rushing downward to the sea. Would you dam up its waters in the channel they are wearing for themselves? To see them dash away your puny barriers, and sweep forth in desolation and ruin over the face of the earth! No:—rather strive to direct them in a fertilizing stream, giving beauty and verdure to your fields, and diffusing health and abundance throughout the land. This, and this only can you do: in the onward progress of liberty, make yourself frankly of it; labor to purify its counsels, to elevate its purposes, to guide its march.

There is no deep mystery in this matter. Reflect for a moment. What is it which forever stirs and agitates the human race, drives the perpetual movement of the social machine, bands men with men, and men against men, raises up hostile armies to fight in mortal conflict on the field of battle, convulses nations, overturns or builds up empires? Can we discriminate the tremendous

agents, which sweep from time to time over the face of the moral world, like whirlwind, deluge, or internal fires in their action upon the physical world?

We perceive, on the surface of things, considerations of interest, affection, self-love; the gratification of passions, desires and appetites; all that great class of motives, which are of an egoistic, interested and personal character. But as these are, in the universal estimation of mankind, the less laudable inducements of action, and as, in their influence on great masses of men, they are in the long run the less potent likewise, all men have a tendency to ascribe their actions, in the relations of social life, to considerations of opinion, conviction, or principle. So many of the martyrs of liberty and faith in all ages,—the prophets, apostles and saints of old,—the hunted of sanguinary intolerance in later times,—they who have dyed the scaffold or the sod with their blood in attestation of their pride or sincerity of conviction,—all these were the victims of a professed principle. The great wars and fearful revolutions of our own age are signal proofs of that overwhelming force of opinion, which, beyond aught else, inspires individual men with energy of individual purpose, and combines them in mighty bodies for the execution of some common purpose. It was for opinion's sake, to maintain a religious principle, that our fathers abandoned their native land, and all the dear ties and fond associations of home, to seek free scope for the promptings of conscience, though it should be in wilderness. It was for opinion's sake, to maintain a political principle, that our fathers entered upon the war of independence, and by inestimable efforts, sufferings and sacrifices, accomplished our national revolution. And it is the intensity of the

sentiment, not its truth or correctness exclusively, which gives it power. Indeed, whatever may be the hidden springs of conduct, this it is, which all pretend and put forward in the front line of contention; evincing, among so many other facts, the sense of right and wrong ever prominent in all the combinations of society, and without which, indeed, it is plain society could not exist, but would be torn asunder by violence or interest, and resolved into elementary fragments.

In our time, then, and peculiarly in our country, the predominant idea, which invigorates every breast, is the sentiment of freedom; it is the empire of the many which rules over us; all things bend to the equalization of the advantages of social union; the mass is heaving with the fermentation of unceasing change; and society now exhibits that gigantic energy, that terrible activity of the democratic principle, which, according as it shall be well or ill directed, will exalt our race to such a glorious elevation as it has never yet attained, or shake the quivering earth to its foundations.

Oh Liberty, dear Liberty! who, that looks on the proudest pages the muse of history ever penned, will gainsay thy power? Who, that follows the long train of splendor which tracks thy career through the starred regions of genius and of art, will not admire thy majesty and thy glory?

Descended from the Most High, the doer of his invincible will in the cultivation of the earth and the civilization of its inhabitants, thou didst make thy dwelling place amid the wild hills and the isle-spangled seas of Greece. Verdure sprang in thy path. Earth gladdened

in the light of thy smiles. All nature became instinct with life and with love. Man threw off the slough of barbarism, and started up etherealized under thy spirit-stirring touch. It was no fabled Pallas that bestowed the olive on Attica, no trident of Neptune evoked the war-horse from the struck sod, no dragon's teeth sown by Cadmus gave to him the builders of Thebes. Thou, Liberty! thou didst breathe into the Greeks the inspiration of eloquence and song, thou didst kindle in their hearts the burning love of the beautiful and the sublime, thou didst make of them the heroes and the statesmen, whose names yet ring through the world like a clarion calling to victory. In the omnipotence of thy cause did the Athenians conquer on the plains of Marathon; it nerved the arms of the Spartans who fell not in vain by the pass of Thermopylæ; it scattered the navies of the Persian in the straits of Salamis; it annihilated his invading hosts at Plataea and Mycale. Thronged cities, temples, monuments of art, admirable even to this day in their scattered fragments, rose at thy bidding. Thy very foot-prints have hallowed to the end of time the land of memory and of taste, thine own ever glorious unforgotten Hellas.

Winging thy flight to other lands, Rome bore testimony to thy presence, in that fiery impulse of her consuls and her soldiery, which, carrying her victorious eagles out of Italy, compelled the universe to bow down before those potential symbols of triumph and of terror, the renowned SPQR, and established the empire of the Roman People wherever of nations and of lands men could be found to subdue.



Nor less, in modern times, did the earth witness the lustre of thy name, in the spirit which awakened commerce, science, and the arts in the cities of modern Italy, won the victories of Sempach and Morat, gathered the merchandises of the world to the shores of Holland and Britain, unfurled the tricolor of the French Republic on half the cathedrals of Europe, and echoed the war-cry of independence from the heights of Bunker's Hill to the sierras of the Southern Andes.

Thy chosen minister,—the right hand of thy power,—the angel of thy counsels and thy purposes,—the organ, through which thou wieldest mankind, combining their movable masses for the execution of thy will,—is Eloquence.

Young men of America, I exhort, I implore you to elevate and expand yourselves to the greatness of your mission. It was well for Greece that the glory of Miltiades would not suffer Themistocles to sleep. Be persuaded,

The noblest trophies of mankind  
Are the conquests of the mind.

Never, in the long lapse of time, was there an epoch, which more emphatically demanded the highest order of oratory, which tendered to it more magnificent rewards, when it possessed a nobler field of usefulness and glory, than at this hour. Wherever Liberty is, there is Eloquence. Greece, Rome, Britain, France,—all the nations in which popular influence has been felt,—are examples of the fact. But America is a living witness before us,

Beyond all Greek, beyond all Roman fame,

to attest the importance and the dignity of a conscientious high-aimed cultivation of the faculty of eloquence.

In illustration of this point, let me solicit your attention, for a few moments, to the actual condition of eloquence in modern times as compared with ancient oratory.

We, in the United States, possess all the forms of secular eloquence, popular, forensic or senatorial, practised among the Greeks and Romans. Even their panegyric orations have come to make a part of our national usages, with which they are in all respects highly congenial. In substance, if not in precise form, we have their schools of philosophy; with this material difference in our favor, that, with us, elaborate oral teachings are applied to a wider range of topics, and are more deeply and pervadingly diffused through all the ranks of society. Beside which, the custom of popular addresses, of a literary character, or in commemoration of great events, if it be not an absolute novelty in this country, as it certainly is not, is yet more general, more habitual, more a marked feature of manners, among us, than in any other age or nation. In addition to all this, we have the new department of religious eloquence, which, though it found place to some extent in the Lower Empire, did not spring up until the decay of liberty and learning, and the approach of the barbarism of the middle age, had extinguished or degraded all the other varieties of eloquence.

Sacred oratory, while in both Protestant and Catholic Europe it is of infinite value and efficiency as the instrument of moral impression, is yet more signally important in the United States. Religion exists among us, not as in Protestant England or Catholic Spain, for the cause that

the law ordains that it shall exist, or that the public force upholds its existence, but because of the virtues and efforts of its professors and teachers, and the spontaneous veneration of the community. The popular principle, which predominates in all our institutions, has drawn this also into the vortex of its influence. How much more arduous and responsible the duty, then, of the sacred orator, when the maintenance of his religion, as well as its earnest and zealous profession, depends upon the efficacy of the moral and intellectual power he shall acquire and exert! Never did a holier, a nobler ministration devolve upon the pulpit,—never any, which demanded more intense, more devoted exertions.

In secular eloquence, there are two important particulars, and only two, in which the ancient orator possessed any advantage over the modern; the Athenian or Roman, for instance, in comparison with the American.

In the first place, the political organization of his country was more favorable to the Athenian or the Roman. All the eminent republics of antiquity were cities rather than nations. Though in Athens the Areopagus, and in Rome the Senate, acted a distinct part in the affairs of government, yet the real sovereignty resided in the body of the qualified citizens, in other words, the People. They were not only the electors, but also the legislators and the judges of the Republic. Hence, when Demosthenes mounted the *bema* of Athens, when Cicero stood in the forum of Rome, he addressed the *constituency* of his country, at the same time that he addressed its legislative body, its supreme judicature, and its executive sovereignty. Open, for instance, the Orations of Cicero. You shall see him, at one time, going before the People

of Rome to defend a client accused of corruption or murder; at another, to discuss the expediency of a law for the distribution of the public lands; at another, to induce the conduct of a war to be conferred on a general whom he favored; at another, to satisfy his fellow citizens of the justice and propriety of the measures he was himself pursuing as consul. Parallel cases might be cited from the Orations of Demosthenes. Here, it is evident, the course of things is widely different. The people are electors merely. They control the operations of government, not immediately in their own persons, but indirectly through the representatives whom they choose for that purpose. In addition to which the population, with us, being more numerous and more scattered, the orator never can address himself directly to the congregated people of the United States, nor even of his own particular State. Hence, in this country, the orator cannot exercise at a moment the same visible influence over the general mass of his countrymen, who receive the matter of his discourse only in the printed report, and to whom the immediate impression of the force and the persuasive charms of his oratory are wholly lost, or imperfectly represented only by description or imagination.

In the second place, though the modern orator should in all other respects possess the same advantages with the ancient, yet he encounters a competitor, unknown to the latter, in the press. The influence of a great orator over the public mind in Rome or Athens was divided only with rival orators. The general multitude received their knowledge of public affairs, their understandings and their passions were appealed to, chiefly through the

medium of oral communication. True, in imitation of the example set them by Pericles, the eminent speakers of that day, as of this, prepared themselves carefully, nay elaborately, for the exhibitions of the forum or the senate; and themselves wrote out the speeches which survive in attestation of their merit. But the ancients did this in the just and laudable regard of their own fame, to catch the winged words they had uttered before they should fly from the memory, and thus to confer durability on their glorious conceptions. The effect, designed to be produced by the speech, had been produced by it, before it was enrolled in the recording parchment. But the modern speech cannot enter and pervade the popular mind, unless it be committed to writing, and multiplied by the press, which, in its own independent efforts, divides with the orator the means of imparting facts, opinions, and arguments to the people. This circumstance may not have the effect to render the modern orator inferior to the ancient; nay, if he possess the taste and habit of composition, it affords him an additional field of public impression; but it diminishes the consequence of spoken eloquence as such, in proportion as it confers consequence on written eloquence.

Save in these particulars, I deny that there was any important circumstance to stimulate the growth or promote the success of civil eloquence in Greece and Rome, for which there is not a parallel in the United States. We have too readily admitted the unsurpassable excellence of ancient oratory. Critics have perplexed themselves in vain to account for the supposed fact, that no speech has been or can be composed in modern times, possessed of the same rhetorical beauties, and equally

effective to persuade or convince, with the old masterpieces. At one time they have dwelt on the more elaborate cultivation of the art of oratory among the ancients; at another, they have imagined that classic antiquity permitted in the orator more of passionate vehemence and unreasoning declamation, than the fastidiousness of modern taste can tolerate. There is nothing in either of the suppositions. They contradict each other. To the first, it is a sufficient reply, that the cultivation of an art or science follows upon the demand for it, and the argument admits our capacity to attain excellence by cultivation. The second, which impeaches the good taste of the Greeks and Romans in this particular, is refuted by so many severely perfect monuments of sculpture and architecture, which they reared,—by the beautiful compositions, in poetry, history and philosophy, which they have left us,—by the critical writings of Aristotle, Cicero, Longinus, Quintilian and others,—and still more by the extant orations of Demosthenes and Cicero, the best of which, in the different styles of each, are admirable specimens of argumentative business eloquence. And when it is so difficult to account for a supposed fact, it is well to retrace our steps, and re-consider whether the fact exists. It may be paradoxical to say so, but I aver what I believe, when I say, that the same ardor of delivery, the same sublime flights, the same pathetic and passionate appeals, which moved a classic audience, would move us. And, if time served, the position might be established by the citation of eminently successful passages in modern debate, to parallel whatever of boldness or pathos there may be in classic orations of antiquity. Eloquence, then as now, was “good sense deliv-

ered in proper expression ;” calm or impassioned as circumstances require ; formed to satisfy the taste, act on the passions, and instruct the understanding.\*

This current idea, that there is more of boldness, fire and sublimity, in the matter or manner of ancient oratory than would be tolerable now, is a mere mistake, originating in the coldness, the tameness, the subduedness of debate, which, until a very late period, characterized the parliamentary eloquence of the English.

Writers belonging to the continental nations of modern Europe might easily conceive there was something unattainably great in the eloquence of antiquity. Where could they look among themselves for popular institutions and free deliberative assemblies ? No where, on a large scale, until the epoch of the French Revolution. And did they dream that without debates there could be oratory ? Ardent, vigorous, diversified, soul-inspiring eloquence, and yet no liberty ? Orators having nothing to discuss and nobody to address ? No wonder there was not eloquence. It were as reasonable to enter the cemetery caverns of the Upper Nile, and as you unroll the linen cerements, to expect that the shrivelled corpse, which has lain there a

\* In support of the idea, that more of violence and excitation distinguished the manner of the ancients, their *supplicatio pedis* is commonly cited. This, it appears, was a gesture not rare. “Ubi dolor ?” says Cicero,—“Ubi ardor animi, qui etiam ex infantium ingeniiis elicere voces et querelas solet ? Nulla perturbatio animi, nulla corporis ? Frons non percussa, non femur ? *Pedis, quod minimum est, nulla supplicatio ?*”—But was this in fact a very extravagant gesture ? Could the stamp of a sandaled foot upon the marble pavement of the temple of Concord or of Jupiter Stator, be an act so violent to the sense as the striking of the clenched hand upon a desk or table, which is a very common gesture in our public assemblies ? In representing to themselves the effect of the *supplicatio pedis*, have not our critics had before the mind’s eye the boarded stage of a modern theatre ?

dry mummy embalmed for three thousand years, shall walk forth in the radiant beauty and elastic animation of life, as to look to find, in governments without free institutions, oratory such as electrified the popular assemblies of republican Rome or democratic Athens.—Eloquence moves only in the train of Liberty.

Something better was to have been expected of England. She at least had the blood of liberty in her constitution, and a parliament to be the theatre of deliberative eloquence. Yet, in the middle of the last century, there was no answer to the question of David Hume, when he significantly asked,—“ In enumerating the great men who have done honor to our country, we exult in our poets and our philosophers; but what orators are ever mentioned? Or where are the monuments of their genius?”—And it is the assured truth, that, down to that time, you can discover, in the records of English deliberative oratory, scarce a single specimen which rises above the humblest mediocrity. Nay, it had been rather a prevalent affectation of the English, to deem slightingly of eloquence as such; and to cultivate in debate a spiritless, jejune, slipshod style of speaking, no way superior to common conversation. Yet what a revolution in this respect supervened upon England, when the struggle between her and her American colonies began, and the fetters of feudalism fell from the limbs of Western Europe, as if melted asunder by a stroke of the lightning flash of Liberty! Then, like the pythoness on the tripod quivering under the influence of the descended deity within her, the people of England began to be stirred by the inspiration of eloquence. They demanded,—what did not previously exist,—reports of the debates, which, owing to the narrow limits of the houses



of parliament, were to all practical purposes pursued with closed doors; and Pitt, the greatest orator of his age, found a worthy reporter in Johnson, the greatest literary genius of his age. With more extraordinary events, and with the grander developments of popular freedom, appeared the brilliant names of Burke, and Fox, and Sheridan, and Erskine, and the younger Pitt, to honor England; while the feudal institutions of France, like the walls of the ancient city in holy writ, were crumbling before the crash of the trumpet-voice of Mirabeau; and you could no longer demand without reply,—“Who are the orators of modern Europe, and where the monuments of their genius?”

Social changes, which, in Europe only half developed, are there gradually working out the elevation of civil oratory, are in full and unchecked activity in America. Our institutions are founded in revolution; theirs in prescription. We discuss public questions upon the broad fundamental principles of natural right and original convenience, as well as of convention and of practical policy; they are hedged in by narrow considerations of mere precedent on file, or of make-shift and temporary expedient. Our government is frankly republican; theirs monarchical or aristocratic. We possess freedom; they but desire to possess it. If Liberty, acting upon the necessities of the time, could raise up a Demosthenes in Greece, a Cicero in Italy, it is equally capable to bring to pass the same thing in America.

Our forefathers were of the men who overturned the monarchy of Britain, brought King Charles' head to the block, and reared up the brilliant and too short-lived English Commonwealth. They were single minded en-

thusiasts,—ready to do and die in the cause of truth,—valuing freedom of opinion more than country, peace or life,—possessing a cool, deep-seated vigor,—dauntlessly courageous,—in resolution immovable,—the very zealots of Liberty. They abandoned everything dear in the name of country and of home, and planted themselves in the midst of the wilderness, a forlorn hope on the outposts of the world, that here they might be free. Men are sometimes disposed to deem lightly and speak loosely of the harsher traits in the character of the Puritans. But even their infirmities, their sternness of temper, their religious exaltation, their disregard of the graces of life, were the predestined agents of good in the work they were called to perform. Think you that men of gentler stamp could have laid broad and deep the earth-fast foundations of this mighty Republic?—Never.—Few and feeble as they were, cast in mid-winter upon the ice-locked shores of a bleak northern sea, a small band of self-exiled, homeless wanderers, they nourished in their inmost souls the unshakable conviction, that, under the blessing of God, the seed they were to sow with prayerful confidence of trust in Him, would send up a growth to overshadow the earth, and shelter nations beneath its far-spreading limbs. They acted accordingly. They gave to the world the first example of a written constitution, a genuine social compact, founded on the corner stone of republican equality. With a forecast more than human, a sort of prophetic inspiration, they established, in each of their colonies, a true popular representative assembly, such as no other country, not even England, possessed. They were free, and they were determined to continue free. “Great Britain protects America,” said George Granville,

“and America is bound to yield obedience. If not, tell me when the Americans were emancipated?” “The gentleman asks,” replied the elder Pitt, “when were the Colonies emancipated?—But I desire to know when they were made slaves?” Lord Chatham was right. Practically, and to all important purposes, the colonists were free from the moment when they turned their backs on their native England; and the true question between them and the mother country at the time of the Revolution was, not whether Great Britain would acknowledge the independence of America, but whether America would consent to receive the domination of Great Britain; whether from the condition of practical freedom they were content to relapse into that of servitude. That struggle,—blessed be God that he sent victory to our arms,—terminated in the assured independence and the constitutional organization of the United States.

Thenceforth a new spectacle was exhibited to the world, of a people whose institutions were wholly experimental; who, collected from every part of the world, had sought a refuge here from unequal and oppressive laws; without kings, without hereditary rulers, without a religious establishment, without prescriptive authority of any kind, to balance the elements of change; which strove to reconcile a democratic organization with security abroad and stability at home; which made every man a freeholder, and coupled universal suffrage with universal education; and which undertook this novel experiment, not in the contracted limits of a city or a province, but in a country broader than all Europe.

There still pours in upon us a perpetual stream of the writings and the arts of Europe, nay, of its living

population, flying hither to escape oppression at home, and with its passions yet festering in the untented soreness of centuries of wrong. All the traits of nationality which belong to our parent nations, their opinions, usages, religions, are thrown here into a common heap, like fragments of the earth disrupted by great elemental convulsions of flood and fire, to be re-moulded and re-crystallized into new combinations of beauty and strength, by the force of the formative energies nature has implanted in us. It is the very spirit of change walking forth over the universe.

In Europe, all things are bound together by long prescription. To change a law, to introduce a local improvement, you thrust aside a multitude of interests, which in their turn disturb other interests, until it is impossible to foresee at what point, in the compacted fabric of its population and its institutions, the shock of the movement is to stop. You cannot touch a pillar, without menacing the downfall of the edifice. Here, on the contrary, such is the boundless field of expansion afforded by our vast interior resources, and such is our facility of adaptation to circumstances, that improvements are adopted as readily as conceived; and while other nations are discussing the possibility of attempting an improvement, here it is undertaken and accomplished. We are neither attached to nor repelled from a thing, because it is new, or because it is old. In one thing only are we immovably constant; to one object alone, like the magnetic needle, in all positions and all places ever pointing to its pole, do we hold ourselves amid all changes inseparably fast. We cling to liberty in every vicissitude. It is the bright sun, which vivifies

and rules our universe; the subtle, unseen, but ever present influence, which holds its parts together with harmonious action, widely as they move asunder, in the seeming of absolute self-dependence; the everlasting centre, about which, though in their eccentric orbits they shoot off awhile towards the uttermost walls of the world, they still unceasingly revolve.

Hence the irrepressible mobility, the all-comprehensive enterprise, the never-tiring activity of our national character; the spirit of improvement, of melioration, ever at work throughout all the ranks of society; the presumption which dares, and daring overcomes, every obstacle; the marvellous vigor, which builds up great cities, and plants populous states, in a single generation. History records the fearful celerity with which the northern barbarians overran the provinces of the Roman Empire to slay and lay waste. We swarm across the wide reach of a continent, with the same irruptive rapidity of advancement, to create instead of to destroy; leaving in the trail of our onward march, no smoking ruins of antique art, no provinces changed to deserts, but the monuments and the culture of our civilization.

It may be, that, in these general representations of the condition and progress of society among us, there appears to the cool observer, something of the exaggeration often ascribed to the language and manners of our country. But, in a land where nature has placed no barrier to human efforts, and the reality of to-morrow is perpetually outstripping the warmest anticipation of yesterday, it is idle to expect the staid formality of a stationary people.

Suffice it for our present purpose, that, thus far, the experiment of republican institutions, despite the evil

auguries of its enemies, has prospered, beyond even the sanguine expectations of its friends. The men of the Revolution have not yet ceased from among us. We ourselves are but the second generation of Independence. And yet already, in this brief period, we have risen to be the rivals in wealth and resources, the fearless equals in power, of the greatest among the nations of Europe. Yes, derided, scoffed at, calumniated, assailed from abroad with every species of obloquy, tried in the burning furnace of two disastrous wars, amid perils and difficulties, foreign and domestic, our bold experiment of a Representative Republic, based on a Democracy, is in the full tide of splendid success. Point me, if you can, to any other country in Christendom, which has attained,—I do not say such palmy prosperity in so short a time,—but which has attained at any time so much of the public peace and individual happiness, which belong to well-ordered government. It cannot be done. We disquiet ourselves greatly, if some frantic mob, as it may happen, strikes for wages, destroys a building, or takes away a single life. We bewail the occasional excesses of party spirit. These are the temporary effervescences of a free people. They are fit objects of lamentation and of shame. But we must not permit ourselves, in the resentful contemplation even of such untoward events, to judge unworthily of the practical working of our institutions, as compared with those of any other country. What should we say, if our government saw itself impelled to devastate provinces with fire and sword, extinguishing the blaze of their dwellings in the blood of their population, to stay the rage of civil war? Or if an act of Congress should come down from the Capitol, commanding the demolition of New York, or an iron

hail-storm of shells and red hot balls to be poured in upon devoted Boston? If calamities like these had befallen us, if domestic violences of this enormity had occurred, we might well begin to think there was radical faultiness in our social constitutions. Yet, of such measures, executed to the letter, I will find you terrible precedents in the contemporaneous history of the internal administration of the dominions of Spain, France, the Netherlands, Russia, even of England; to say nothing of the foreign wars, which, during the same period, have carried off million upon million of the youth of Europe, fattened her vineyards and her corn-fields with human gore, trampled her soil into mud under the advance and retreat of embattled hosts, given up her cities to sack, and her hamlets to conflagration? I reiterate, then, I utter it in the emphasis of deep conviction, that down to this hour, we have conducted, with unparalleled success, the practical experiment of Liberty.

Educated young men of America, ye who are to be responsible for the future fate of this magnificent trial, shall it fail in your hands?

*Di! prohibete minas, di! talem avertite casum!*

Say, shall it not rather continue to prosper, gathering new triumphs in proportion as our institutions expand themselves over the continent? Will ye speed the gallant bark, freighted with the blessings of mankind, on her way? Do ye rally to the cause of your country, of your race, of the world? Speak!—But I need no answer from your lips. I see it in your eloquent eyes, beaming with the ingenuous ardor of youth. I feel it in

your beating hearts, warm with the love of truth and honor. I know that ye will go forth out of these consecrated walls, that ye will quit the scenes of your boyhood, to mingle in the manlier vocations of life, resolved that ye will not be wanting to the spotless fame of your Puritan fathers, to the hopes of the world, to the destinies of the American Republic.

It is well. Consider, then, how you are to cause yourselves to be beneficially felt in the affairs of society, how you are to make your mind to be the mind of other men, how you are to disseminate through the world the good learning, the good purposes, the good principles, which you possess. By force? By the authoritative control of the acts of society? Will you say to the less informed, but still the right intentioned, among your fellow creatures,—

*Sic volo, sic jubeo, stet pro ratione voluntas ?*

I tell you it may not be. Knowledge is diffusing itself among the million. With it, power is passing from the palaces of the few to dwell in the humble abodes of the many. I remember, the first time I entered the British House of Lords, feeling a sense of disappointment steal over me, as I cast my eyes on a hundred gentlemen sitting unceremoniously scattered about on the crimson benches, none of them differing in appearance from myself or any other of the undistinguished crowd which gazed on the scene. I asked myself,—Can these be the proud barons of England,—that mighty order, which came in conquering with the Norman,—which made and unmade kings at will, and gave the law to nations? Where are the



plumed helmets? The rich armor flashing back the sunlight from its burnished surface? The prancing steeds? The steel-clad men-at-arms? The fluttering banners? The trump to clang forth its point of war? The leader's battle-cry to rally his charging squadrons to the clash of the onset? All the pomp and circumstance, which in the old time accompanied the reality of power?—Such are the first emotions, which press on the thoughts of the beholder; but which soon yield to strong impressions of the moral grandeur of the place and the scene. I saw before me the glorious proof, that, in the affairs of the world, mind had now got the partial ascendancy of matter; since he who rules over his fellows does it no longer by the high hand, and by the application of mere brute force; he is a moral agent, acting by and through other moral agents; and he needs not panoply of proof on his body, nor sword and shield perpetually on his arm, nor will these much avail him, as the means of his greatness and authority.

Knowledge, I repeat, is diffusing itself among the million. With it, power is passing from the palaces of the few to dwell in the humble abodes of the many. The general tendency of the time is toward the equalization of political rights. That which is a tendency elsewhere is a fact here. In other days, in other countries, men have been ignorant of their rights and their power, shackled and manacled by prescriptions, and thus held in subjugation to the will, and sacrificed to the passions or the interests, of hereditary rulers. Here, the people are conscious of their equal right and of their physical power. They heed no prescriptions. They do not yield obedience to the son, because they happened to obey the

father. They cannot be driven by force: they must be guided by reason. If they err, they err under the influence of erroneous ideas. We have many virtuous men among us, and wise too, who sit with folded arms, deploring the evils of the time. I say to all such in public as I say in private,—Yours is but a timid virtue, a barren wisdom. Instead of idly complaining that affairs go wrong, bestir yourselves to make them straight. Feel that you have public as well as private duties. If by the possession of happier natural gifts than those about you, or a larger education, you perceive that they err, to act upon their conduct, you must address yourselves to their motives of conduct. Thus are you to check the occasional ebullitions of popular violence, to which this, like every other country, is subject. Thus are you to make the laws of the land to be respected and obeyed. Thus are you to counteract the machinations of selfish disorganizers, who prefer the part of the demagogue Menestheus to that of the patriot Phocion, and who direct only to betray. If you happen to be invested with the legal authority of your fellows, you hold it by their voluntary appointment, not by any independent tenure of your own; and you can continue to hold it, or to exert it efficaciously, only so long as you administer it in conformity with their sentiment, unless by reason you convince them that your own sentiment is more for their interest, advantage, or honor, and so make your views to be their views. No matter what be the cause, which has drawn to you the popular confidence, whether it be your enlightened and successful enterprise, your superior knowledge, your sanctity of life, your wisdom in council, your eloquence in debate, your valor in the field; whatever

it may be, you are powerful only as the exponent of the power of the People. Representing their will, you represent their force.

Understand me. I come not here to utter the vapid party-cant of the day, which flatters men to their undoing with false assurances of their infallibility, which is willing the extemporaneous caprices of the hour shall take the place of the established law, and which seems disposed to strike out from the human vocabulary such words as *piety, virtue, principle, good order*, and to write down the word *democracy* as a general substitute for each of the others, just like the vain quack vaunting his nostrum as a panacea for all diseases. God forbid.—It behooves us to consider things as well as words. I have endeavored to lay before you a plain and simple analysis of society as I see it, that you may judge of the means by which it is to be deterred from evil and impelled to good. It may be resumed in a single sentence. It is this :—The science of administration,—by which I mean the indirect, as well as the direct, ordering of society,—is becoming every day more and more the application of a moral or intellectual influence to the minds of men; and he that best communicates the best impressions, will, other things being equal, be the best able to exercise a salutary and lasting authority in the maintenance of good order, and the moral, intellectual, and religious elevation of society.

Opinion, it has been said, makes men great, valiant, pure, anything; and whatever it can do on the one side to please and flatter us, it can do the same on the other side to molest and grieve us; as if every man had a several-seeming truth in his soul, which if he follow can

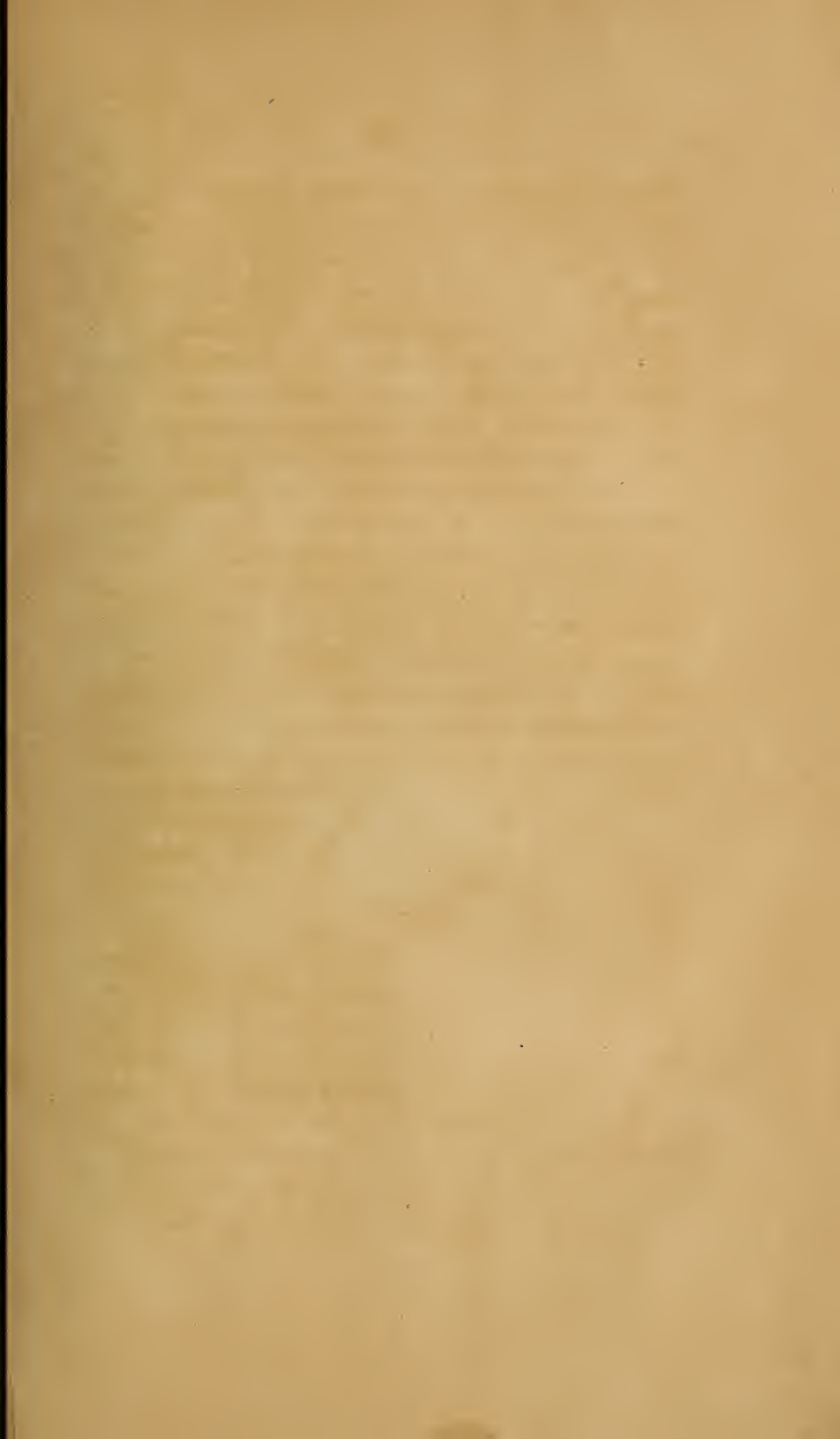
for a time render him either happy or miserable; and so what is truth to one shall be rank error to another as wise.—Can this be?—No. The line of social duty, in a civilized community, is not thus obscurely defined. There is, in each man's heart, a silent monitor, a speechless but eloquent expounder of right and wrong, which permits no act of his life, no resolution of his will, no spontaneous unbidden guest even of his thoughts, to pass unchallenged. Its judgment is the foundation of duty in religion and morality; it is conscience; and its voice utters the oracles of truth. Is it the result of habit, education, temperament, the opinions we gather up in society, and those which are instilled into us in early life, or derived from books? Or do we admire virtue from a selfish consideration of utility? Or does this admiration arise from the sympathy of our nature with goodness in the abstract as a principle of fitness? Or is there a moral sense implanted in us, an organic perception or inborn faculty of virtue, which, if not dimmed or clogged by the use of evil, nor overpowered and stifled by the mastery of corrupt passions, may serve to be the guardian of our lives, to sustain us in adversity by the ministrations of its consoling presence, and to stand watchfully beside us in more perilous prosperity lest we stumble and fall? However this be, certainly reason, if one have been so happy as to follow the leading of its genuine light, and have escaped the delusive influence of some false counterfeit of its lustre, may have set him in the right path. Or, lifting up his eyes from the book of nature to the book of inspiration, he may, by devout meditation of the sacred volume, have gained the nearer view of duty and conscience, which religion bestows.

And, in the ordinary fulfilment of our duty as men and as citizens, we are bound, in the first place, to take and diligently use all due means to inform us of the truth. With set and honest purpose to arrive at sound conclusions, with appliance of all that may contribute to enlighten our understandings and purify our hearts, with catholic and fair-minded zeal to animate us, discarding every selfish intent, binding unholy passions as with the cords of a resolved single-mindedness,—thus are we to seek, and thus may we hope to find, the true course of social obligation.

Having in good faith pursued the search of truth, it is our duty, in the second place, to declare it for the information of others; to do this, not in a spirit of obtrusive proselytism, not in place or manner revolting to the consciences of men, but as fitting occasion and the exigencies of society require. We are bound not only to make up a mind, but to act in that mind when made up; for thus only can we rightly discharge ourselves of that high commission, which the possession of reason, of education, and of moral and religious responsibility, imposes upon us. There is, even in the utterance and profession of the truth, a salutary influence upon the soul of the speaker. Zeno desired those, who called the gravity of Pericles pride, to be proud the same way, telling them the very acting of an excellent part might insensibly produce a love and real imitation of virtue. And silence, the suppression of opinion, is a ground, whether of reproach or commendation, which no man can stand upon without the sacrifice of his independence. Men, who thus cover up their sentiments, may chance, perhaps, to pass through life more tranquilly than others, who frankly carry their

hearts in their hands. But certainly it is not from the former, that the world receives its impulse ; it is not by them that the great problems of human life are solved ; it is not for the talent hid in a napkin through fear of its possible loss, that religion has promised its recompense.

True, to you, as to Aristides, it may chance to be proscribed for your very virtues. Every man is liable to be thoroughly taught, that, in the "corrupted currents" of this world, passion, prejudice, and interest so bias and sway the judgments of men, that the good we strive with our whole might to do may win no renown ; that the loudest applause or the loudest condemnation shall attach to a trifle or an accident. What then?—Life was not granted as solely for the pursuit of happiness as we construe it, but rather for the fulfilment of duty, whether in doing or suffering, whichever shall best beseem the infinite wisdom of God.



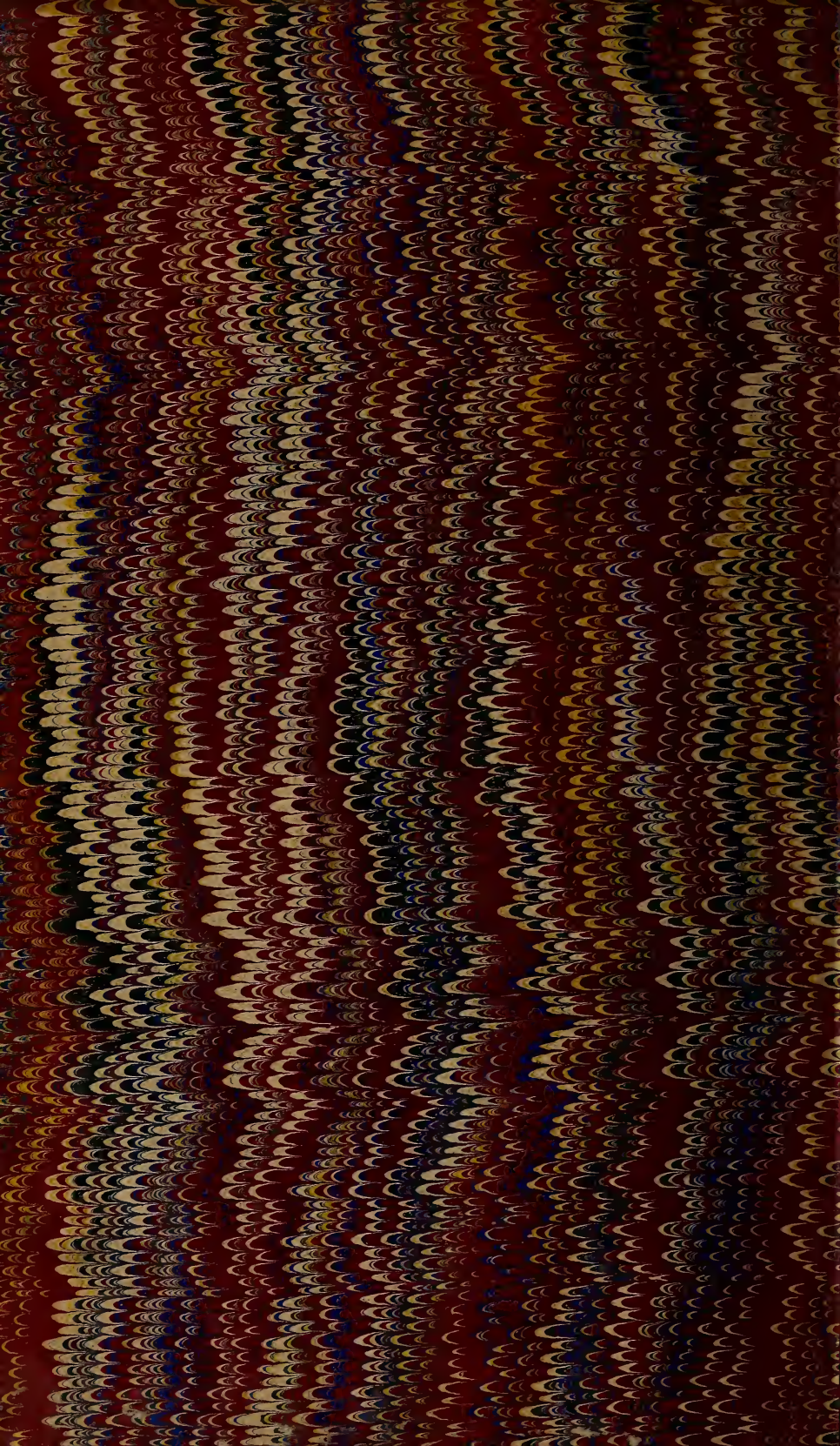


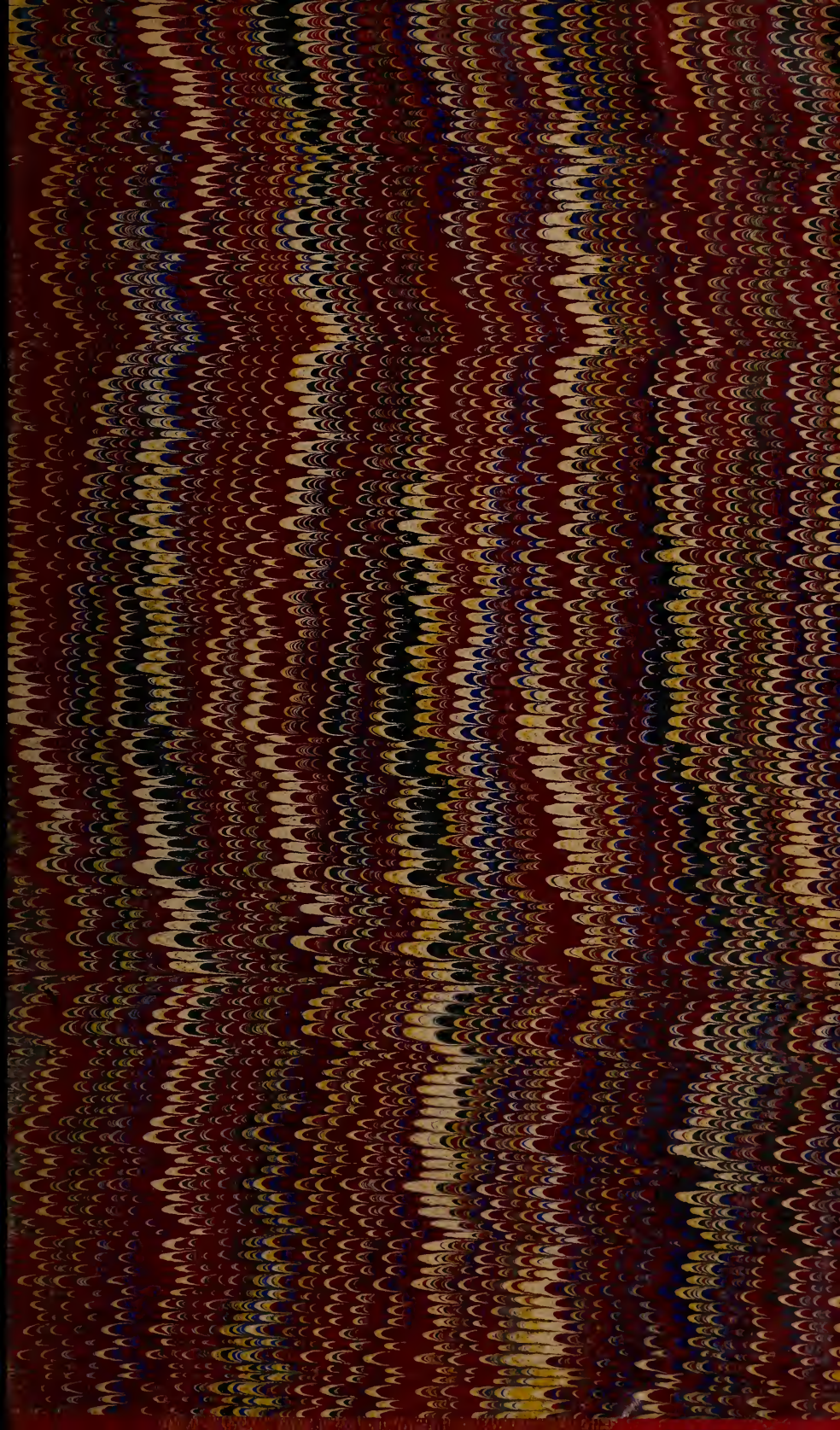












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